



Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, May 15, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks led with follow-up reports on the arrest of a 23-year-old man for his involvement in the murder of a 7-year-old girl in Niigata.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Hagerty offers Tokyo assurances on DPRK, says U.S., Japan moving toward trade deal

The Wall Street Journal posted an article about Ambassador Hagerty's comments at their CEO Council meeting held in Tokyo on Tuesday. In addition to Ambassador Hagerty, U.S. Ambassador to China Branstad, new Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son and several other prominent figures participated in the event.

The article highlighted Ambassador Hagerty's reported remark that the U.S. and Japan are rapidly moving toward an agreement on bilateral trade, adding the Ambassador Hagerty said an American trade delegation visited Tokyo this week. According to the article, the Ambassador said U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Toshiimitsu Motegi, Japan's economy minister, were making "great advances." Commenting on these remarks, the Wall Street Journal opined that Japan has been resistant to entering a bilateral trade agreement with the U.S., fearing far-reaching demands for concessions in industries like autos, but the U.S. has stepped up pressure in recent months, sparking a new dialogue between the countries' top trade officials.

The paper also highlighted the Ambassador's comments on North Korea. Ambassador Hagerty reportedly said there was "no daylight" between Japan and the U.S. in their goals for talks between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un next month. The paper added that some in Japan fear the U.S. might make a deal with North Korea that leaves Pyongyang with

missiles and even nuclear weapons that could reach Japan, but the Ambassador said Tokyo can “rest assured” Washington won’t leave its allies in a situation where they can be menaced.

The Journal added that, in another reassurance to Japan, Ambassador Hagerty said the U.S. would keep the issue of Japanese abductees on the agenda for its talks with North Korea. Japan says at least 12 of its citizens could still be alive in North Korea after being abducted by Pyongyang decades earlier. North Korea says there are no surviving abductees, according to the paper.

INTERNATIONAL

Diplomatic Bluebook urges North Korea to abolish WMD, ballistic missiles

NHK reported that the Foreign Ministry submitted its Diplomatic Bluebook 2018 at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday. The annual report says that on policy toward North Korea Japan will closely coordinate with the United States and South Korea to achieve the complete elimination of the North’s weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. Citing North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs, the report describes Japan’s current security situation as one of the most precarious in the postwar era. It also says that Japan has increased its pressure on the North to the maximum level by responding to Pyongyang’s various attempts to evade sanctions, including the transfer of goods from foreign vessels on the high seas. The report also notes that inter-Korean relations have improved this year, resulting in a North-South summit on April 27, and that a U.S.-Japan summit on April 17-18 and other diplomatic efforts by the leaders of other countries have been made recently. The Bluebook also says that Japan should seek the early resolution of the abductions of Japanese nationals, which is its top diplomatic priority.

Concerning China, the report says that moves to improve ties gained momentum last year, which marked the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties between Japan and China, and that Japan should work to steadily improve its relations with China from a broader perspective.

- [Japan policy report stresses cooperation with U.S. over N. Korea](#) (Kyodo News)

ROK says South Korean ship was not involved in transfer of goods with DPRK tanker

NHK reported that Defense Minister Onodera informed reporters on Tuesday that South Korea has told Japan that an ROK tanker was not involved in the transfer of goods to a North Korea tanker in international waters in the East China Sea earlier this month as alleged by Japan. An MSDF ship spotted a South Korean tanker alongside a North Korean tanker in the East China Sea on May 3, and the GOJ asked the ROK government whether the two vessels were involved in the transfer of goods.

- [S. Korea denies ship involved in N. Korea sanctions evasion](#) (Kyodo News)

North Korean delegation visiting China to observe economic activities

NHK reported that a group of high-ranking North Korean officials, including Workers' Party of Korea Vice Chairman Pak Tae Song, visited an agricultural research facility in China on Tuesday. Noting that the group, which has been visiting Beijing since Monday, also plans to visit local regions in China on Wednesday to observe their economic activities, the broadcaster speculated that North Korea may have sent the delegation to China to prepare for the possibility of economic sanctions being relaxed and economic assistance being provided by Beijing in the future.

- ["Several" senior North Korean officials said to be visiting Beijing](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Japan urges calm as U.S. embassy opening in Jerusalem sparks protests](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan proactive for Middle East peace](#) (Yomiuri)
- [U.S. embassy relocation a flashpoint in Middle East](#) (Nikkei)
- [Expert: Embassy relocation and withdrawal from Iran nuclear accord have same root](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan to give wind power a spin in Russia's Far East](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan to boost Pacific island nations' maritime law enforcement capabilities](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Vietnamese president to visit Japan late May for talks with Abe](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan, Bangladesh to help realize early return of Rohingya refugees](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Abe hopes for closer Japan-ROK exchanges](#) (Yomiuri)

Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko to visit Hawaii next month

NHK reported that Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko will make an official visit to Hawaii from June 4 to 9 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of Japanese immigrants to Hawaii. According to the Imperial Household Agency, the couple will leave Narita Airport on June 4 for Honolulu, where they will attend the opening ceremony of the Convention of Nikkei & Japanese Abroad on June 6 and meet with Japanese immigrants in the evening. The couple will also attend a ceremony commemorating the 150th anniversary on June 7 and place flowers at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. The network said this will be their first visit to Hawaii.

ECONOMY

Japan to host RCEP ministerial meeting in July

NHK reported that Economy, Trade, and Industry Minister Seko told reporters on Tuesday that Japan will host a ministerial meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership involving 16 nations in Tokyo on July 1. This will be the first time for Japan to host a ministerial meeting of the group, and Singapore will co-chair the meeting. Seko was quoted as saying: "We have a clearer view of the issues. We hope to pave the way for the conclusion of the negotiations." The network noted that there are differences between nations such as Japan and Australia that hope to establish higher level trade rules by drastically cutting tariffs and countries such as India that place priority on protecting their domestic industries.

- [Japan to host RCEP ministerial meeting in Tokyo on July 1](#) (Kyodo News)

Cashless society spreads to Japan

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported that the cashless revolution in China is spreading to Japan, saying that already many people are using smartphone apps instead of cash to pay at shops and restaurants and many companies are entering the mobile payment market. The program also reported on how Sweden is on the verge of becoming a cashless economy, saying that a growing number of shops there are refusing cash payment and banks are closing down ATMs. The program said while cashless societies may be convenient, they also give rise to security issues.

- [Gov't to OK poker for Japan's casinos](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Japan automakers race past rivals in profit margins](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Legal revisions planned for self-driving vehicles / Obligations of drivers likely to be eased](#) (The Japan News)
- [Cryptocurrency tech eyed for money transfers](#) (The Japan News)
- [Public comments ignored in review of Basic Energy Plan](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on May 14, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gist of interpellations at Lower, Upper House Budget Committees, May 14](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Japan scrambles to blunt the pain of consumption tax hike](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Chastened Aso apologizes to victim of sexual harassment](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [LDP picks candidate for Niigata gubernatorial race, pledges effort to win election](#) (Sankei)
- [Keidanren recommends creating "digital ministry"](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: Kake scandal](#) (Akahata)
- [Cartoon: Scandals](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

OPINION POLLS

- [38% support cabinet while 44% do not, NHK public opinion poll](#) (NHK)
- [Those opposed to work-style reform bill outnumber those in favor, NHK public opinion poll](#) (NHK)
- [Cabinet and political party support rates, NHK public opinion poll](#) (NHK)

EDUCATION

- [Japan's universities struggling under corporate status](#) (The Japan Times)

SOCIETY

- [Infographic: Transition in population by age group](#) (Mainichi)

SECURITY

Japan to focus on maritime security in ocean policy

NHK reported that the GOJ approved at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday its Basic Plan on Ocean Policy for the next five years. In view of foreign government ships' intrusions into Japan's territorial

waters and foreign fishing boats' illegal operations there, the updated policy focuses on maritime security rather than marine resource development, which was the focus of the previous version. In an attempt to grasp the maritime situation more accurately, the GOJ plans to utilize data collected by satellites, share it with agencies such as the SDF and the Japan Coast Guard, and enhance cooperation with allies and friends to strengthen surveillance. The policy also includes a plan to promote development and research in the Arctic and participate in efforts to establish international rules for resource development in the region.

- [Japan's new ocean policy shifts emphasis to defense and security](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [FCLP drills by U.S. carrier-based aircraft on Ioto Island to be extended for several days](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Okinawa must never be made Japan's sacrificial lamb](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- ["Sympathy budget" film again questions base-hosting burden](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

- [Okinawa affairs minister comments on U.S. bases' impact on local economy](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Okinawa municipalities to widen base monitoring with cameras](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Infographic: Comparison of land area for facilities exclusively used by U.S. forces in 1972 and 2018](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Infographic: Cabinet Office budget for Okinawa promotion and development, 1972–2018](#) (Okinawa Times)

